

Procurement and Service of Whole Grain Products

PURPOSE:

To address the importance of whole grains in the diet and to encourage sponsors to increase the amount of whole grains included in the school meals.

SCOPE:

Sponsors of the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program.

DESCRIPTION:

Congress endorsed the consumption of foods consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, such as whole grains, by including a new provision in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. The provision requires the Secretary of Agriculture to issue guidance to States and school food authorities to increase the consumption of foods and food ingredients that are recommended in the most recent Dietary Guidelines. Choosing a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains, is one of the recommendations applicable to the school meal programs. Once the new Dietary Guidelines are issued, USDA will be providing additional information on how to incorporate those recommendations in the school meals program.

The importance of whole grains in the diet is now being recognized by food manufacturers and food processors. Recently, a major cereal manufacturer has made a decision to reformulate its product line using only whole grains. USDA encourages school food authorities to inquire about the availability of whole grain products when developing product specification and making their procurement plans next year. USDA would also like for schools participating in the school meals programs to consider purchasing and offering whole grains whenever possible as part of their efforts to promote healthy eating and improving nutritional well-being.